

REMARKS

In the Office Action dated June 28, 2006, the Examiner objects to the Preliminary Amendment filed on September 28, 2001 as failing to comply with the amendment practice of July 23, 2003. The Preliminary Amendment was filed almost two years before the new amendment practice took effect. Therefore, the Applicants request that this objection be withdrawn.

The Examiner further objects to the Preliminary Amendment because it does not discuss pending claims 34-49. Claims 34-49 were added by a second Preliminary Amendment filed on March 19, 2002, which the Examiner fails to acknowledge in her Office Action.

In the Preliminary Amendment filed on September 28, 2001, the Applicants canceled claims 1-7, 22, 28 and 31 and amended claims 8, 12, 15, 23-27, 29, 30, 32 and 33.

In the Preliminary Amendment filed on March 19, 2002, claims 8-21, 23-27, 29, 30, 32 and 33 were canceled and new claims 34-49 were added. Following the March 19, 2002 Preliminary Amendment, claims 34-49 were the only claims pending in the application. (The second Preliminary Amendment was also filed well before the change in amendment practice of July 23, 2003.)

At the Examiner's request a copy of the Preliminary Amendment filed on September 28, 2001 was facsimiled to the Examiner on June 15, 2006. The Applicants noted in their cover sheet that a copy of the current pending claims was attached. Unfortunately, the listing of claims included in the facsimile did not include

U.S. Application No. 09/964,475

the changes made by the second Preliminary Amendment on March 19, 2002. The Applicants apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused.

For the Examiner's convenience, a copy of the pending claims is included in the listing of claims on pages 2-11 of this Reply.

In view of the foregoing remarks, the Applicants submit that this application is now ready for examination. Prompt examination on the merits is respectfully requested.

To the extent necessary, Applicants petition for an extension of time under 37 CFR 1.136. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, or credit any overpayment of fees, to the deposit account of Mattingly, Stanger, Malur & Brundidge, P.C., Deposit Account No. 50-1417 (referencing attorney docket no. ASA-724-02).

Respectfully submitted,

MATTINGLY, STANGER, MALUR & BRUNDIDGE, P.C.



Daniel J. Stanger
Registration No. 32,846

DJS/sdb
(703) 684-1120